

"O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, That has such people in't!"

The Tempest: the Discovery of the Other

"The Tempest" by William Shakespeare throughout history gave rise to a number of different interpretations that ended up producing completely different explanations of what happens on stage. This is ironic as this very play was probably intended to confuse the public and critics as well who tried to find a hidden message behind the reality of what was being represented.

The quote at the opening is, according to the critic's general interpretation, one of the most controversial and probably abused and decontextualized of all time in Shakespeare's literary production. This words are pronounced by Miranda in Act V, when she meets the castaways who until then were completely separated from Prospero and her daughter. In the context of the play, it is not clear why would Miranda pronounce such words of astonishment, as they appear to be quite out of her character behaviour until that moment in the play. Her words without a doubt assume a different and much more complicated meaning in the text which would deserve a more thorough analysis, but we can go on and consider some of the implications of her words in a more general and abstract sense.

A considerable group of critics considered this exclamation of Miranda as an act caused by the truthful astonishment she experiences when she first discovers something she has never seen before: that is, all the men that were there and perhaps, love. In fact, she lived on a stranded island apart from the civilized society all her life. Others speculated the survivors of the Tempest have apparently similar, but in fact opposite, feelings for Caliban, who looks like a horrible monster incorporating all of undesirable human traits: he is a monster to fear and to marginalize, to isolate and condemn. The theme of confrontation with a stranger was in fact of full actuality at the time Shakespeare wrote the play, with the European colonizing the New World and destroying entire native civilizations.

Also, these ideas were resumed in the 20th century, in a wholly different manner, by Aldous Huxley in his influential book *Brave New World*. Here the Savage, coming from a world where people can have children and emotions are not surgically removed from people's minds, finds himself projected in another world where humans are genetically modified to behave in predetermined ways and live in the complete ignorance of the fact that they are subjugated and controlled, driven by the hedonistic lifestyle that the Government encourage them to have them to keep them distracted. Clearly here the context is completely different: the sharp contrast between the two worlds is used as a critic to Industrial Society, and the pain of discovering how this Brave New World is like will eventually lead the Savage to commit suicide. Anyway, before Huxley, this rhetoric of the Savage has been extensively developed by many eminent illuminists, primarily Rousseau in his *Discourse on Inequality* and in other works as well.

So, it becomes extremely clear how the meaning of Miranda's words is subverted and this is a perfect example of the duality of interpretations in *The Tempest*.